

**Remarks of Peter Carlson
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**Before the Education Committee
On S.B. No. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS
Sections 28, 29, 30, 31 and 33**

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon, Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Peter Carlson, and I'm a sixth grade teacher in Stratford. I would like to comment on Senate Bill 24, Sections 28, 29, 30, 31 and 33.

On Saturday May 2, 2009, Mayor Dan Malloy stated to a group of Connecticut Education Association teachers, when seeking CEA's endorsement, "When did teachers and other public servants become the enemy?" Three years later Governor Malloy has changed his tune and has joined the anti teacher movement that is sweeping ignorance in this state and across this country. In his state of the state address Governor Malloy attacked teachers stating, "In today's system basically the only thing you have to do is show up for four years. Do that, and tenure is yours." Governor Malloy's proposals and the proposals of education corporate friendly ConnCan and their allies are an affront to all children and to all public schools in the great state of Connecticut. ConnCan's primary purpose is to end all public schools and to create quasi public-private schools that will primarily be for profit. You cannot possibly tell me that the education management organizations that are waiting patiently in the shadows will put students first and not their bottom lines.

First, I'd like to state that section 29 of Senate Bill 24 is an unconstitutional measure. To change teacher tenure as it is currently written is to strip teachers of their constitutional right to participate in the democrat processes of government, for we will constantly be in fear of losing our jobs. How dare the Governor strip teachers of this basic right? As a lifelong democrat who participates in the political process, I will be in constant fear of political reprisal, once due process rights are diminished or eliminated. I will no longer be able to participate politically if I want to keep my job. My voice will be silenced. Tenure is not a guaranteed job. I have seen numerous teachers in my school district fired in the last 5 years for negligence and just cause. Our superintendent has had no problem eliminating teachers who were not doing their jobs.

Secondly, the initiatives that are currently being proposed under Senate Bill 24 Section 30 and 31 in place of current teacher evaluations contain too many variables to be scientifically valid. Using a standardized test to measure a teacher's classroom performance is ludicrous and not a valid measure of a teacher's effectiveness and performance in the classroom. Many politicians and bureaucrats pushing their education reform agenda tend to ignore the fact that this type of performance evaluation does not work.

Here are some questions that a colleague of mine asked in one of his blog posts recently regarding the validity of rating teachers based on standardized tests:

- Are the tests valid and reliable measures of student achievement?
- In analyzing the scores, who is included? Are students who were not in the class for the entire process included in the data? What about special education students?
- Are the achievement comparisons made by a cohort analysis of students who participated in the entire program?
- What about transients? Some teachers face a continually changing student class load. Are teachers responsible for the achievement level of students who did not participate in the entire process?
- What about teachers whose areas are not specifically tested — fine arts, physical education, foreign language, or social studies? How will they be assessed?
- Does the culture and climate of the entire school affect the classroom, instruction, and achievement?
- What about the research on “value-added” assessments? Are these instruments reliable, producing consistent results over time?
- What about the role of principals and superintendents? Are they culpable for the lack of student achievement based on test metrics?

The governor is looking to jump-start the economy through innovation and entrepreneurship. Since when does teaching to a standardized test create innovation, inventiveness and entrepreneurship?

Teaching is not simply implementing a scripted formula. It is not just “doing” and implementing. Teaching is more than that. It has to do with teachers and students “being” together in a creative and stimulating process.

Simplistic reliance on tests coupled with complicated rubrics can have devastating impacts. Who would want to work in a profession where you are held accountable for factors out of your control? Are creative and innovative people going to enter a profession that is perceived to be a technocratic activity, rather than a professional obligation?

Third, regarding the waiver for superintendent certificate. Why would we want to reduce the standards for school districts to higher qualified educational leaders? Is the Broad foundation behind this initiative? Many of the Broad leaders that have found their way into the school districts around this nation have been fired for lack of a common knowledge of teaching and learning, or worse, simple embezzlement. **WE** need leaders that are grounded in solid educational leadership, that have high moral values, excellent character, and value teaching and learning. Reducing the qualifications for this position is a slap in the face to our profession and to our current Superintendents who work tirelessly alongside their teachers.

I am a voter and taxpayer and demand that the Connecticut Legislature vote down all of Governor Malloy and ConnCan’s proposals looking to destroy public education and to consider the Connecticut Education Association’s sound educational proposals that will ensure that all Connecticut students will succeed.